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## Reagan's pardon

# The war protesters weren't terrorists

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WASHINGTON — The President abused the facts when he pardoned two former FBI agents who'd approved illegal spying on anti-war demonstrators. Reagan says Mark S. Felt and Edward Miller deserved exoneration because anti-war advocates were taking orders from alien powers and conducting a terrorist campaign at home.

Let's set the record straight.

After assuming office in 1969, President Richard Nixon asked the Central Intelligence Agency to determine whether Moscow or Peking were directing anti-war activists in the United States. But the CIA never substantiated Nixon's hunches.

"There is no convincing evidence of control, manipulation, sponsorship or significant financial support of student dissidents by any international Communist authority," said the CIA-commissioned study in 1970.

One official who'd worked on the project later told the New York Times: "We tried to show that the radical movements were homogeneous responses to perceived grievances and problems that had been growing for years. We said the radicals were clean and that we couldn't find anything."

But that didn't stop Nixon. He expanded domestic intelligence operations, and encouraged the FBI to mount a massive program including surveillance wiretaps and burglaries of student radicals. The program was never implemented, however, because FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wouldn't break the law without written authorization from President Nixon.

Yet, in spite of Hoover's reluctance and the CIA report, FBI agents repeatedly entered the homes of anti-war activists without court-approved warrants. For authorizing illegal entries into the homes of members of the Weather Underground organization in 1972 and 1973, Felt and Miller were found guilty last fall.

In December, the men were fined \$5,000 and \$3,500, respectively, and given suspended sentences for pun-

White House counselor Edwin Meese 3d engineered the President's full and unconditional pardons of Felt and Miller to boost morale in the intelligence agencies. Believing that the agents had not knowingly violated the Constitution, Reagan said they were simply advising Nixon on the activities of foreign powers in this country.

Sadly, President Reagan is badly misinformed on this most recent period of history. An overwhelming majority of dissenters were protesting American terrorism overseas, not plotting it at home.

That's not to say, of course, that some elements of the anti-war movement weren't at one time planning to take some dramatic steps. Yet, by the time the FBI began entering the homes of activists, the threat had largely subsided.

A member of the Weather Underground organization talked to us about the pardon:

"Let's be honest. Had the Greenwich Village townhouse explosion in 1969 not killed several of our group, it's conceivable some very ugly things could have happened that everyone would have been upset about. But the townhouse explosion did happen, and it caused the group to take great steps to ensure that we never hurt anyone."

Regardless of how one interprets the Vietnam period, the most troubling aspect of the Reagan pardon is that law enforcement officials may again overstep their legal bounds for the sake of "national security." Have FBI officials been given the right to abide by a different set of laws than the rest of us?